RIP IT UP

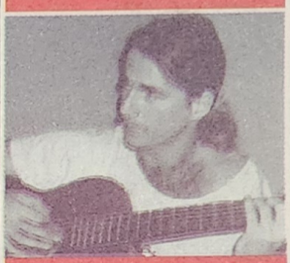
Issue 693 Sep 12 - Sep 18 2002 Free

SUPERHEIST

waikiki

Superheist play Adelaide Uni Bar on Sat Sep 14 with Snap To Zero and Clone B. Identical Remote Controlled Reactions is out now through Shock Records. Waikiki play Enigma Bar on Wed Sep 25 with J-Ded and Goodshirt. I'm Already Home is out now through Warner.

DARREN HAYES



JOHN READ

THE VINES

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get in the van

The Vines

From Seed To Grape

by Lissia Camden

To every young rock'n'roll band still slogging it away third on the bill in a grotty pub to two unconscious drunks lying in the corner – take heart in the story you're about to read.

Forget for a minute that their debut album, *Highly Evolved,* landed in the Top 15 in charts around the world and shipped 300,000 copies in America alone in it's first week. Forget the fact that this month, they've played the MTV Music Video Awards and they're on the cover of *American Rolling Stone* – the first Australian band since Men At Work in 1983. And forget that they not only appeared on *The Late Show With David Letterman* in August, but trashed their dressing room in the most time honoured traditions of rock'n'roll and then destroyed the studio stage as well. Forget all of this. Because once, not so long ago, The Vines were just like you.

In February – that's only seven months ago, count it – they made the grand total of $41 from their last Sydney gig in a small suburban pub. They may be making a little more now, but the simple thing is they're the first Australian pure bile-and-unadulterated-screaming r.o.c.k band to give an international glimmer of hope to any similarly disaffected struggling local musicians in a long, long time. And one day, very soon, it could be you. If you survive the hype first, that is.

"English bands get hyped through the roof all the time, and they're good," reasons a seemingly unaffected Vines bassist Patrick Matthews. "Suede were hyped to a massive extent, but they've made five albums now. You've gotta have some sort of exposure… last year when The Strokes were coming out, I'm sure most people were a bit dubious about it because first thing you hear is, 'they met in a Swiss boarding school' or something, and you think, 'that sounds terrible'…"

You met when you were working together in McDonalds, which is a little less glamorous…

"Yeah! But you think, 'I'm sure people are thinking, 'who's this band…'. I really like the Strokes record, and after liking it, it doesn't matter what you heard [about them] before. So hype isn't too bad, I guess…"

Which is fortunate, as The Vines are getting a lot of it. Since they signed to Capitol Records in the US late last year, life has been a little crazy. The ball has rolled due to a lot of people getting very excited, very quickly – from the management team who signed them after hearing them play on Sydney community radio in April 2000, to Beck producer Rob Schnapf who returned an e-mail to them repeating 'The Vines!' ad infinitum for the opportunity to get the band to record their album in LA (which they did July last year), to British music mag *NME* - who've continuously made their tracks singles and album of the week, and proclaimed their Glastonbury Festival appearance in June a 'triumph'.

"But it doesn't matter what other people say, because we're not trying to please other people with it," says front man Craig Nicholls earnestly of The Vines' music. "Though even when we do it's a good thing. We have to please ourselves first. Yeah. We've been surprised. [But] what everyone else was saying never really mattered to us, we liked playing in a band and writing music and not just kind of… it wasn't about being famous - we wanted artistic satisfaction first. And we had 40 songs going in to making our first album and there was a whole mixed bag of stuff. Doing it with Rob Schnapf, it turned out really cool, just the way we hoped it would and maybe even a little better. So it's music and we take it seriously, and I definitely think it's a positive thing, people taking it seriously too. And the more the better because it's about… it's about listening to music and being free and just doing what you want."

"It doesn't matter what other people say, because we're not trying to please other people."

Craig, for what it's worth, doesn't spend our interview sucking on a bucket bong or locking himself behind things like every article you've ever read on The Vines would lead you to believe he would. Everything is either 'fun' or 'cool', and he just talks. Rapidly. Like an overexcited child whose forgotten to take their Ritalin (which, it soon transpires, is just the sign of an artist who's overbrimming with ideas for The Vines next album – already written - and an untainted view that *everything* should be about music), speaking in a strange hybrid of Australian-American-English and pronouncing words with a Mongol lilt - like when talking about the completion of *Highly Evolved* with Schnapf.

"It was fon, man. Once we'd done it, it was just so focking *cool*". He just seems incredibly *normal,* which is refreshingly nice. Because onstage, he's most definitely not.

It usually starts from the moment the first chord is struck. You've seen the *Get Free* clip – you know how it is. The arms usually go first, the seemingly double-jointed elbows waving wildly. That's followed by the hair (which, for the record, just *grows* that way; "I don't use anything," he says blankly. "I don't pay attention to how I look, I just make art."), which takes on a life of it's own. A leg lurches out here, a knee gives way there, and by the chorus, when the face kicks in, the body of Craig Nicholls has already been replaced by a spasmodic whirl of limbs. Soon enough the eyes – rolled back in their sockets above a mouth that's distorted with it's tongue hanging out – are no where to be seen. It is, to be honest, quite mental.

"I think singing really transports him to another place," Patrick tells us later, explaining why Craig often seems like he's in a trance while the others members of the band tune in and out. "But I remember [You Am I bassist] Andy Kent said once that when he was playing he was thinking about whether he was going to catch a bus home or get a taxi. I'm like that."

And rest assured, when you hear The Vines have destroyed yet another piece of equipment or smashed instruments-into-stage-into-other-instruments in Hendrix-style abandon, it's not Patrick, or second guitarist Ryan Griffiths or drummer Hamish Rosser who've usually done the damage. Take their *Letterman* appearance, where Patrick stood to the side while Craig (who'd knocked the tuning out of his guitar about three riffs in) screamed wildly into the mic, around the floor, and over an amplifier, until getting up on the drum riser and blindly spearing the instrument into the drum kit – while Hamish was still finishing the final bars of *Get Free* – and missing the drummer by less than half a metre. If you look up Ladbrokes, no doubt there's probably bets being laid as to when Craig is going to fully knock his first band mate unconscious onstage – though whacking Patrick with his guitar during an appearance on British music show *CD:UK* earlier in the year was a good enough attempt.

So there you have it. Says one fan site: "to hear The Vines play together can reaffirm your faith in rock and roll." It's time to replace the 'can' with 'will'. As if you ever needed convincing.

The Vines play **The Tivoli** on ***Wed Sep 18*** and ***Thu Sep 19*** with **The Anyones** and **Neon**. *Highly Evolved* is out now through EMI.